

Texas Early Learning Council Meeting Minutes

August 2, 2024 from 11:00am – 1:00pm
Teleconference via Zoom

Attendance

- Katherine Abba, Ph.D. (Faculty, Child Development Program for Houston Community College)
- Weldon Beard (President of the Texas Head Start Association)
- Alferma Giles (Director of the Texas Head Start State Collaboration Office at the Children's Learning Institute, UT Health Science Center at Houston)
- Melissa Hoisington (Franchise owner with Primrose Schools and former President of the Texas Licensed Child Care Association)
- Becky Huss-Keeler (Professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of Houston-Clear Lake)
- Kim Kofron (Director of Early Childhood Education for Children at Risk)
- Tori Lee (Director of Early Childhood for Texas Education Agency)
- Beatrice Mata (Director of Early Childhood Education for the Ector County Independent School District)
- Stephanie Rubin (CEO of Texans Care for Children)
- Amber Scanlan (Senior Vice President and Director of Client and Community Relations for PNC)
- Kierstan Schwab (Executive Director of the Texas Public Broadcasting Association)
- Jennifer Stockemer (Owner and Director of Ivy Vine Preschool, LLC)
- June Yeatman (Lead teacher at the Austin Community College Children's Lab School)
- Meghan Young (Director of Early Childhood Intervention Program for the Texas Health and Human Services Commission)

1. Call to Order

Stephanie Rubin called the meeting to order at 11:01 AM.

2. January 2024 Minutes Approval

Katherine Abba moved to approve the April 2024 meeting minutes and Kierstan Schwab seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken, and the minutes were approved. A quorum was met during roll call.

3. Public Comment

Erica Hayes: Cornerstone Learning Academy in Houston; Erica shared her opinion that there is a need for more funding for Child Care Services (CCS) to address the waitlist of approximately 14,000 children in the Gulf Coast region. At her center, there is a capacity of 108 children, 38 children enrolled, and 28 children on subsidy. She also shared her center's challenges with ISD Partnership. In her experience, the districts are reluctant to collaborate. Eleven children from her center are leaving to enroll in the district.

Jacquelyn Reza: Flowers in the Garden Child Development Center in El Paso; Jacquelyn shared her opinion that there is a need for more funding for CCS to cover child care expenses for families working to improve their lives through employment, school, or job training. She stated the waitlist for CCS is long. Additionally, families with an existing CCS contract face a one to two year wait to add additional children, forcing them to find alternate solutions for care. Families also fail to complete CCS paperwork on time, which has led to lost contracts. She suggested the need for a system to prevent such losses. She also stated that she feels funding must match the high quality of care provided. Reduced staff hours and high payroll costs have led to staff leaving for ISDs. Average salaries at her center range from \$9 to \$12 per hour.

Deepanshu (Deep) Pandita: US - Kido Education Group; Deep reiterated the funding needs and emphasized he feels there is a critical need for increased funding before any progress can be made in expanding program reach. Deep stated private providers would be more willing to participate in CCS and make investments in workforce and real estate if there was some assurance that minimum payments to providers would be made over a period of time instead of being tied to attendance.

Kerrie Judice: Director of Policy and Advocacy at TexProtects; Kerrie discussed the Early Learning Strategic Plan aimed at advancing public policy to strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect. She highlighted the [Texas Prevention Network](#), a group of over 240 individuals who meet virtually every other month, featuring guest speakers and state agency updates. The network fosters collaboration and knowledge exchange among professionals to address the needs of families and providers.

4. Texas Early Learning Strategic Plan

Allison Wilson provided updates on Strategy 1.1 from Goal 1: Family Navigation, Access & Engagement and Strategy 2.1 and 2.4 from Goal 2: Workforce Recruitment, Retention & Support of the [Texas Early Learning Strategic Plan](#).

Meghan Young shared an update on Strategy 2.4 from Goal 2: Workforce Recruitment, Retention & Support.

5. Updates from TELC Members

Chelsea Cornelius (Director of Research and Evaluation, Texans Care for Children) gave an overview of [The Texas School Readiness Dashboard](#).

Cathi Arwood (Manager, Child Care Program Policy, TWC) provided updates on the Family Child Care Network, an overview of Employer Child Care Solutions, and information on an Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation project.

Megan Young (Director, Early Childhood Intervention, HHSC) provided an update about the Request for Applications for new contracts for state fiscal year 2026 for ECI subrecipients. It is planned to be released in October 2024.

6. Upcoming Early Childhood Events

Prenatal to Three Collaborative Open Meeting – August 21
[Early Childhood Education Division Webinars](#)

7. Adjourn

Stephanie Rubin adjourned the meeting at 12:56 PM.